

The invention claimed is:

1. A composite wheel, comprising:

a wheel having an outer surface, a plurality of exposed apertures formed in a circular pattern in a central hub region of the wheel, and a centrally located hub aperture extending through the wheel; and

a wheel cladding including a body substantially conforming to the outer surface of the wheel, the wheel cladding having an exposed outer surface and an inner surface facing the wheel when the wheel cladding is attached to the wheel, the wheel cladding including at least one alignment tab extending from the inner surface for engaging the hub aperture and aligning the cladding with respect to the hub aperture, and at least one support post extending from the inner surface substantially proximate the hub aperture and structurally supporting the wheel cladding with respect to the wheel.

2. The composite wheel of claim 1, wherein the at least one alignment tab includes a plurality of tabs spaced radially about the hub aperture when the cladding is attached to the wheel.

3. The composite wheel of claim 1, wherein the at least one support post includes a plurality of support posts spaced radially about the hub aperture when the cladding is attached to the wheel.

4. The composite wheel of claim 1, wherein the wheel includes a support surface extending outwardly from the outer surface of the wheel, and wherein the support posts abut the raised support surface.
5. The composite wheel of claim 4, wherein the support surface extends circumferentially about the hub aperture.
6. The composite wheel of claim 1, further including:  
a cap member located within an aperture centrally located within the wheel cladding, and wherein the cap member is operably connected to the wheel cladding.
7. The composite wheel of claim 6, wherein the cap member is operably connected to the wheel cladding via a snap-type fit connection.
8. The composite wheel of claim 6, wherein the cap member includes at least one engagement tab that snappingly engages the wheel cladding.
9. The composite wheel of claim 8, wherein the at least one engagement tab of the cap member includes a plurality of engagement tabs each including a shoulder that engages the inner surface of the wheel cladding.

10. A wheel cladding assembly, including:

a body member adapted to conform to an outer surface of a wheel, the body member having an exposed outer surface and an inner surface, and including at least one alignment tab extending from the inner surface for engaging a hub aperture centrally located within the wheel and adapted to align the body member with respect to the hub aperture, and a centrally located aperture; and

a cap member located within the central aperture of the wheel cladding and operably connected to the wheel cladding.

11. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 10, wherein the cap member is operably connected to the body member via a snap-type fit connection.

12. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 10, wherein the cap member includes at least one engagement tab that snappingly engages the wheel cladding.

13. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 12, wherein the at least one engagement tab of the cap member includes a plurality of engagement tabs each including a shoulder that engages the inner surface of the body member.

14. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 10, wherein the at least one alignment tab includes a plurality of alignment tabs spaced to abut the wheel about the circumference of the central aperture of the wheel.

15. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 10, wherein the body member further includes at least one support post extending from the inner surface and adapted to abut the outer surface of the wheel.

16. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 10, wherein the at least one support post includes a plurality of support posts spaced to abut the wheel about the circumference of the central aperture of the wheel.

17. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 10, wherein the at least one support post of the body member is adapted to abut a raised support surface extending outwardly from the outer surface of the wheel.

18. A wheel cladding assembly, including:

a body portion attachable to the outer surface of a wheel, the body portion having an exposed outer surface, an inner surface, and a centrally located hub aperture;

at least one alignment tab extending from the inner surface of the body portion for engaging a hub aperture of the wheel and adapted to align the body portion with respect the wheel; and

at least one support post extending from the inner surface of the body portion substantially proximate the hub aperture of the body portion and adapted to structurally support the body portion with respect to the wheel.

19. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 18, wherein the at least one alignment tab includes a plurality of tabs adapted to be spaced radially about the hub aperture when the cladding is attached to the wheel.

20. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 18, wherein the at least one support post includes a plurality of support posts adapted to be spaced radially about the hub aperture when the cladding is attached to the wheel.

21. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 18, wherein the support posts are adapted to abut a raised support surface of the wheel that extends outwardly from the outer surface of the wheel.

22. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 18, further including:

a cap member located within the centrally located aperture of the wheel cladding and operably connected to the wheel cladding.

23. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 22, wherein the cap member is operably connected to the wheel cladding via a snap-type fit connection.

24. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 22, wherein the cap member includes at least one engagement tab that snappingly engages the wheel cladding.

25. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 24, wherein the at least one engagement tab of the cap member includes a plurality of engagement tabs each including a shoulder that engages the inner surface of the wheel cladding.

26. A composite wheel, comprising:

a wheel having an outer surface, a plurality of exposed apertures formed in a circular pattern in a central hub region of the wheel, and a centrally located hub aperture extending through the wheel; and

a wheel cladding including a body substantially conforming to the outer surface of the wheel, the wheel cladding having an exposed outer surface and an inner surface facing the wheel when the wheel cladding is attached to the wheel, the wheel cladding including at least one support post extending from the inner surface substantially proximate the hub aperture and structurally supporting the wheel cladding with respect to the wheel.

27. The composite wheel of claim 26, wherein the at least one support post includes a plurality of support posts spaced radially about the hub aperture when the cladding is attached to the wheel.

28. A wheel cladding assembly, including:

a body member adapted to conform to an outer surface of a wheel, the body member having an exposed outer surface and an inner surface, and including at least one alignment tab support post extending from the inner surface and adapted to abut the outer surface of the wheel

substantially proximate a centrally located hub aperture of the wheel, and a centrally located aperture; and

a cap member located within the central aperture of the wheel cladding and operably connected to the wheel cladding.

29. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 28, wherein the cap member is operably connected to the body member via a snap-type fit connection.

30. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 28, wherein the cap member includes at least one engagement tab that snappingly engages the wheel cladding.

31. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 30, wherein the at least one engagement tab of the cap member includes a plurality of engagement tabs each including a shoulder that engages the inner surface of the body member.

32. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 28, wherein the at least one support post includes a plurality of support posts spaced to abut the wheel about the circumference of the central aperture of the wheel.

33. The wheel cladding assembly of claim 28, wherein the at least one support post of the body member is adapted to abut a raised support surface extending outwardly from the outer surface of the wheel.

34. The composite wheel of claim 28, wherein the at least one support post of the body member is adapted to abut a raised support surface that extends circumferentially about the hub aperture.